

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2004

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 4:00 P.M., with members Bloomfield, Raser, Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt, Sullebarger, and Wallace present. Absent: Mr. Kreider and Kirk.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Monday, February 9, 2004 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted (Motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Sullebarger).

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS & TRANSITION ZONE APPROVAL,
CENTRAL PARKWAY TO 12TH STREET, BETWEEN VINE AND JACKSON
STREETS, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report for this application to construct a parking garage and attached mixed-use building on the block bound by Central Parkway, Race, Twelfth and Jackson Streets in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District. She indicated that this is the fourth time the Board has heard this application. At its last meeting on February 9, 2004, the Board granted a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to begin site work and approved zoning variances necessary for construction. The zoning variances were conditioned on the Board's approval of the final design. Ms. Cowden said the applicant is returning to this meeting seeking a COA for the final design and certification that conditions have been met for the zoning variances.

Ms. Cowden indicated that the proposed project is composed of two related components - the parking structure on the eastern two-thirds of the site and mixed-use structure on the western third. The proposed garage seeks to reflect the design of larger industrial buildings in Over-the-Rhine such as the adjacent Hale-Justis and Art Academy buildings. Ms. Cowden said that the scale, mass and height of the garage are similar to the early twentieth century structures shown in historic photographs and maps of this block. Likewise, the mixed-use building with its variety of shapes and materials reflects the proportion and mass of the historic structures that once faced Vine Street.

Ms. Cowden said that the proposed project also furthers the goals of the Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan that emphasized the need for owner-occupied housing, new retail and additional parking. Staff recommended that the Board grant a COA for the work and establish a procedure for reviewing final permit drawings.

Several members of the public were present to comment on the proposed project. Mr. Senhauser reminded the speakers that the Board's decision on this application is limited to its conformance to the historic district guidelines; all other issues are outside its purview. He asked that all giving testimony limit comments to the relevance of the design and not repeat other speakers' comments or what they themselves might have testified at earlier meetings.

Mr. Matt Knotts, owner of 1201 Jackson Street and proprietor of a business at that address said he was still disappointed in the north elevation of the garage opposite his building. He said he would favor a design that brought greater pedestrian (not vehicular) activity to the street.

Mr. John Hauck said that he had been surprised by the original design that he felt did not meet the historic district guidelines. Although he still had reservations about the project, he felt the subsequent changes have improved the design.

Mr. Ray Carr an owner of property on Reading Road and a founding member of the Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce said that he sees a good, functional project, but it lacks “beauty” that would attract visitors to the site. He compared the scheme with other Chicago projects that have made a greater impact on their streets.

Pendleton architect Ken Jones said he thought the community had been a victim of the process and asked whether the Board had had input in drafting the request for proposal for this project. He was particularly concerned about the brief reference to historic guidelines in the document. Mr. Senhauser answered that it had not. Mr. Senhauser confirmed that the historic district guidelines also pertain to the garage. Mr. Jones likened the recent design modifications to icing on a cake and that the garage façade had received insufficient attention. He said he agreed with Councilman Tarbell’s public comments that the elevated floor level of the live/work units on Vine Street is not conducive to retail.

Mr. Bloomfield apologized for having to leave the meeting, but commented that he felt the design had progressed to a point where it met the historic guidelines. He said he thought the project would be a benefit to the neighborhood and would vote to approve the scheme presented at this meeting.

Marge Hammelrath, Over-the-Rhine Foundation, said that the design has come a long way from the original concept but is not as forward looking as she would hope. She said the project still needed greater commercial emphasis and suggested Kroger should consider occupying retail space in the project.

Gregory Smith, President of the Art Academy of Cincinnati, urged approval of the project. He said the twenty-first century design compliments its nineteenth century industrial neighbors and is the best solution attainable at this time.

Jenifer Briley, design architect with Arquitectonica, and Rob Thrun, of Al Neyer, Inc. were present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Thrun started by outlining changes made since the last presentation to respond to the Board’s design concerns. He indicated that the mixed-use building had been modified to provide direct street access to live/work units on Vine Street. The shape of windows and punched openings has been modified to be more like those on area buildings; the cornice is more substantial and three-dimensional. The residential blocks have been shifted north and divided vertically by differentiating colors of brick.

The Central Parkway elevation of the garage has been simplified to incorporate an extended glass stair tower serving the garage; display storefronts have been added. Likewise, the Jackson Street elevation has been simplified by eliminating the woven pattern of the earlier design. In response to Ms. Sullebarger, Mr. Thrun said that the new stair tower will be transparent and would not have the severe effect of the rendering. Ms. Briley added that the transparency enhances security as well as adds to the industrial character of the design. She also indicated that the banners and murals throughout and the sculpture shown in the framework at Central and Vine are in response to the community’s desire to enliven the façade and offer opportunities to display local artists’ work.

Ms. Sullebarger said she was aware that a committee of the Board had met with the developer and architects two weeks earlier to discuss design alternatives. She asked Mr. Senhauser to outline the issues discussed. Mr. Senhauser answered that he, Mr.

Bloomfield and Mr. Raser had reviewed sketches of variations in composition including alternatives for materials, fenestration and massing as well as details such as the cornice, storefronts and landscaping. Mr. Raser said that the design may not be the best solution, but that in his opinion it had progressed far enough to meet the historic district guidelines.

Ms. Sullebarger said that she wants to support the project, but is still concerned about the Central Parkway façade. She said that it was an assemblage of disparate parts and lacked the monumentality of other buildings on the parkway. She indicated she could not support the design. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt and Ms. Wallace indicated they would support the design. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt said she was pleased with the cooperative process and thought the revised design represented a compatible modern building that met the historic district guidelines.

Mr. Senhauser indicated that he has some reservations about the artwork that has replaced the plaid grid of the earlier design as a principle wall ornament. He was concerned that the work be appropriate to the building and durable. He supported the staff recommendation that this and other unresolved details be subject to final review by the Board. Mr. Thrun confirmed that any changes to the exterior of the mixed-use building would also have to be approved by the condominium association. The Board agreed that given the uniqueness and visibility of the project, approval of the building permit application would benefit from multiple eyes. The Board agreed that the committee of Mr. Senhauser, Bloomfield and Raser would together review and approve the permit set.

BOARD ACTION

The majority of the Board voted (Sullebarger voting no) to take the following actions:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a parking garage and residential/retail development as shown in the drawing present at this meeting with the following conditions:
 - (a) Artwork, signage and landscaping shall be submitted to the Historic Conservation Office for review and approval prior to construction.
 - (b) Final construction drawings shall be submitted to the Historic Conservation Office for review and approval prior to construction.
 - (c) The approval of final construction drawings, and all other associated work including artwork, signage and landscaping shall be subject to the approval of the Chairman of the Historic Conservation Board and Urban Conservator.
2. Accept the design proposed at this meeting as meeting the conditions under which the Historic Conservation Board granted T-Zone approval on February 9, 2004.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser
Chairman

Date